

Mahorney-Harrington House
1423 36th Street, N.W.
(Georgetown)
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-188

HABS,
DC,
GEO,
124-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

MAHORNEY-HARRINGTON HOUSE

HABS,
DC,
GEO,
124-

Location: 1423 36th Street, N.W. (Georgetown)
Washington, D.C.

Present Owner
and Occupant: John A. Harrington (1969).

Significance: Although completely renovated in the 1920's, the basic form of this nineteenth century two-story laborer's cottage was preserved, keeping it in scale with similar buildings in the neighborhood.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Early or mid-nineteenth century; after 1821.
2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The building is located in Square 1247, Lot 813 in Washington, D.C. (formerly Square 77, Lot 104). Formerly, 36th Street was called Lingan Street. The following is an incomplete chain of to the land on which the structure stands. Reference is to the office of the Recorder of Deeds, Washington, D.C.

1821 John Threlkeld to George Mahorney
Deed September 21, 1821 Recorded October 9, 1821
West one-half of Lots 104 and 105.

1829 John Threlkeld and Jeremiah W. Bronaugh, Tr. to
George Mahorney
Deed August 19, 1829 Recorded August 31, 1829
Liber W.B. 26, folio 468
East one-half of Lots 104 and 105

- 1834 Clement Cox, Tr. under trust from George Mahorney to Alfred H. Boutcher (or Boucher)
Deed July 2, 1834 Recorded July 2, 1834
Liber W.B. 51, folio 16
- 1837 John Pickrell, Tr. George Mahorney and wife, Eleanor to Alfred H. Boutcher
Deed July 1, 1837 Recorded November 27, 1837
Liber W.B. 64, folio 455
Remaining portion of northern half of Lot 104 required to complete present Lot 813.
- 1852 Alfred H. Boucher and wife, Sarah to Thomas Hunter
Deed May 10, 1852 Recorded May 17, 1852
Liber JAS 40, folio 427
- 1854 Thomas Hunter and wife, Jane to William W. Corcoran
Deed May 17, 1853 Recorded May 19, 1853
Liber JAS 56, folio 105
- 1866 William W. Corcoran to Dennis Harrington
Deed August 1, 1866 Recorded August 10, 1866
Liber RMH 18, folio 400
- 1901 John J. Harrington and wife, Annie E. Mary E.V. Dugan and husban, Michael A. Catherine A. Woody, widow (all heirs of Dennis Harrington) to Julia Sullivan
Deed June 24, 1901 Recorded August 7, 1901
Liber 2558, folio 409
- 1928 Julia Sullivan died intestate, March 26, 1928. Her only heir, Katherine Sullivan, inherited the property.
- 1969 Katherine Sullivan died in January, 1969, bequeathing Lot 813 in Square 1247 (1423 36th St. N.W.) to John A. Harrington, her cousin.
Will June 22, 1961 Filed February 28, 1969
Administrative number not yet assigned as estate is in process of being settled and probate has not yet taken place.

4. Alterations and additions: The house was extensively remodelled ca. 1928 to 1934. See part II. Architectural Information for details.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

George Mahorney who bought parts of the property in 1821 and 1829 was a bricklayer and an entrepreneur who dealt in real estate. From time to time he operated small businesses. (City Directory).

In the late 1820's, in partnership with Joseph Brigden, he operated a storehouse and grocery. At one point he operated a tavern at the corner of Third (P Street) and High (Wisconsin Avenue). It is possible that among Mahorney's real estate ventures was the construction of the dwelling now known as 1423 36th Street.

In the 1820-30 period Mahorney made numerous land purchases, but by 1832 he was, as were many other land investors, in financial difficulties and lost much of his property in foreclosure suits.

By 1834 Clement Cox held a trust on Lot 104 as well as on other lots owned by Mahorney. On January 26, 1833 Lot 104 along with other property of Mahorney's was advertised in the Georgetown Metropolitan as being for sale at public auction.

Despite his losses, Mahorney continued to live in Georgetown, to deal in real estate and to borrow money from many of the same people. He was also in civic affairs. At one time he was a "Messenger and Scavenger" for the Board of Aldermen of Georgetown, with responsibility for collection bad debts and recovering stolen property.

Alfred Boucher (or Boucher), a grocer, bought part of Lot 104 in 1834 and another portion in 1837. Boucher owned other property in the neighborhood. His business establishment was on the corner of Potomac Street and Bridge Street (M Street). (City Directory).

In 1852 Alfred Boucher and his wife sold the property to Thomas Hunter, who held it only two years before selling it to William W. Corcoran. Tax assessment records for 1865-70 show that Corcoran's property, Lot 104, 30 feet fronting on Lingan Street, extending 120 feet deep, included "Improvements: Two Story Frame Tenement: valued at \$300, while the land was valued at \$250. (Record Group 351, National Archives, Records of The City of Georgetown, Roll 12).

William W. Corcoran had been active in Georgetown affairs for many years. He was an officer of the Potomac Fire Insurance Company in 1831. He was one of the founders in 1840 of the banking firm, Corcoran and Riggs, from which the present Riggs National Bank developed. In 1859 he began to the construction of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, his private collection forming the nucleus of what is now one of the major cultural institutions in Washington. (Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. IV, p.40).

Just after the Civil War, in 1866, Corcoran sold the property of Dennis Harrington, a laborer, who owned and lived in the former Mahorney house on the nearby corner of Third (P) and Lingan (36th) Streets. Dennis and his wife, Mary, resided in part of the house and rented some of their rooms to fellow laborers--the bricklayers, stone-cutters, and carpenters who were arriving in Georgetown in great numbers. (City Directories).

After Dennis Harrington's death in 1867, his widow, Mary, held on to the property on Lingan Street, as well as the nearby property her heirs continued to possess all of this property until 1901.

On June, 1901 Julia Sullivan, a relative, bought the property, although she never lived in the house. Mrs. Sullivan died in 1928 and Katherine, her only child, inherited the property. The house was rented to a series of people for many years. In 1933-34, the house was in such disrepair that it either had to be demolished or repaired. It was at this time that the building was extensively renovated. (conversation with John Harrington).

After remodelling, Katherine Sullivan lived in the house and in later years, until her death in January 1969, shared her home with her cousin, John A. Harrington, who still occupies the premises.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Conversation with John Harrington, 1423 36th Street
Washington, D.C., 1969.

Record Group 351, National Archives, Records of the City of Georgetown (1800-79) Assessment of Real and Personal Property, Microcopy 605, Roll 12 (1865-70)

2. Secondary and published sources:

City Directories:

Georgetown Directory for the Year 1830, p. 10.

For 1834 A Full Directory for Washington City, Georgetown and Alexandria, pp 2, 14.

The Washington and Georgetown Directory, 1853, p. 65.

Boyd's Washington and Georgetown Directory, 1865, p. 383.

Dictionary of American Biography. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930, Vol. IV, p.440.

Georgetown Metropolitan. January 26, 1833. Newspaper Reading Room, Serial Division, Library of Congress.

Prepared by Volunteers for the
Commission of Fine Arts
Washington, D.C.
1969.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a simple frame free-standing house of the early to mid-nineteenth century. The front entrance has been inexpertly redesigned, but the cornice with its unusual modillion placement and the window sills with guttae appear to be early, if not original.
2. Condition of fabric: Good, well-maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Approximately 20' by 16'. Three unequal bays across 36th Street facade. Brick addition at rear approximately 16' by 20'.
2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Wall construction: Wood frame with clapboards main block, brick rear addition.
4. Porches: Recent semi-circular brick stoop has what appears to be an early wrought-iron boot scraper.
5. Chimneys: One at rear of main block of house.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doors and doorways: The front door has six raised panels and is flanked by a pair of fluted column shafts without caps supporting an entablature made of twentieth century stock mouldings.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Windows in general have six-over-six-light double hung wood sash and louvered wood shutters. The sills have three guttae, one at each side one in the center. Shutter-dogs are of wrought iron and appear to be early.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape and covering: Gable; ridge running north-south; standing seam metal covering.
- b. Framing: Wood.
- c. Cornice: Wood cornice has four scrolled brackets and eighteen smaller scrolled modillions. The cornice is unusual in that the modillions are mounted vertically like small brackets.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: Much remodeled in the 1920's, this house has little of its original interior detail. The original house had one room above another with fireplaces in the rear (east) wall and stairs along the north wall. In 1928 the basement was excavated and stairs built to it, a dining room and kitchen were added to the first floor, and a bedroom and bath added to the second floor. The living room fireplace was rebuilt in brick and the second floor fireplace closed up.
2. Stairways: The landing just inside the front door is two steps above the living room floor. From there the closed-string stair ascends along the north wall to the second floor. The enclosed attic stair is above this and is reached from the east bedroom.
3. Flooring: All flooring is modern oak strip flooring except the attic floor, which is very wide random pine boards.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster, painted or wallpapered; basement ceilings are pressed metal.
5. Door and doorways: Most doors have four panels (late nineteenth-century) or two panels (early twentieth-century), but the door to the attic stair is an early batten door complete with original cast iron thumb latch.
6. Decorative features and trim: The living room mantel has been replaced with a brick surround and corbelled mantelpiece. The door and window trim, according to the present resident, Mr. John Harrington, was replaced in 1928, but was an earlier moulding from another source, re-used. It is a wide fluted casing and occurs throughout.

7. Heating: Radiators throughout.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Located on the east side of 36th Street, this house is one of a neighborhood of houses of varying ages and styles which, however, have a uniformity of scale and size. The rear yard is a full story lower than the front yard.
2. Enclosures: Rear yard is enclosed with a wood pale fence. The small front planting area is surrounded with stock wire fencing.
3. Walks: Brick.
4. Landscaping: Informal residential scale planting.

Prepared by The Office of
Walter G. Peter, Jr., AIA
Architect
March 5, 1969

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of a project to record structures in the western part of the Georgetown Historic District in Washington, D.C. The project was conducted by the Commission of Fine Arts with the cooperation of the Historic American Buildings Survey. The resulting documentation was donated to HABS by the Commission and published in 1970 in HABS Selection Number 6, "Georgetown Architecture Northwest: Northwest Washington, District of Columbia". Research for the project was conducted by volunteers under the supervision of Ms. Nancy Black, staff member of the Commission of Fine Arts. Architectural information was prepared by The Office of Walter G. Peter, Jr., AIA. The photographs were taken by J. Alexander. The data was edited and prepared for transmittal to the Library of Congress by HABS architectural historian Emily J. Harris in 1979.